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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001172

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE WILLIAMSON, NSC
FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON, ADDIS ABABA PLEASE PASS TO USAU

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL AU UN SU

SUBJECT: Abyei "BREAKTHROUGH" UNRAVELS THREE DAYS AFTER
BEING FORGED

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1140
1B. KHARTOUM 1121

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) FM Deng Alor explained to CDA Fernandez late on August 3 that a potential Abyei "breakthrough" aimed at providing an interim administration for the troubled region had unraveled only 72 hours after he had informed us of the details (reftel a). Alor and National Congress Party (NCP) lead negotiator Ahmed Haroun had worked out an informal agreement on the Administrator and Deputy Administrator, and on the division and general composition of the 5-person executive council and 20 member legislative council for the region. The NCP had proposed and Alor accepted (subject to ratification by FVP Salva Kiir) that a non-resident, non-Messriyya Arab would take the NCP-nominated Deputy Administrator position. Everyone else would be a resident of Abyei and most of them would be chosen by the SPLM. Setting up an interim administration is a key part of the June 8 Abyei roadmap and would lead to the much needed and long delayed disbursement of oil revenues for Abyei and for both the Ngok Dinka and Misseriyya Arabs.

¶2. (C) Alor related that a sheepish Ahmed Haroun had come to him the morning of August 3, with a new condition from the NCP. Alor believed that such a condition could only have come from President Al-Bashir or VP Taha. Haroun said that the NCP now insisted that the SPLM-nominated Administrator position must also be a non-resident (meaning a non-Ngok Dinka). Alor, himself an Ngok Dinka from Abyei, rejected this new demand as completely unacceptable. He told CDA that the SPLM would either "do without any local government" (as has been the case since 2005) or reserved the right to name its own administration without permission from Khartoum (such a step taken in February with the naming of Edward Lino was a factor in increasing tensions in the region which led to fighting in May 2008).

¶3. (C) Alor said that First Vice President Kiir would try to solve the impasse in meetings at the Presidency beginning August 5. It is too early to tell whether the NCP will stick to this supposed deal breaker of a position. NCP and SAF footdragging on troop withdrawals in late June/early July eventually faded and the SAF 31st Brigade withdrew from Abyei town by July 30 - 44 years after it was sent to Abyei town. The NCP also modified its initial position on Abyei's police and the other Abyei leadership slots - going from asking for a majority of the positions, to half, to accepting about a third (as Alor admitted last week).

¶4. (C) AEC (Assessment and Evaluation Commission) coordinators (US, UK, Norway, Italy, Netherlands) met the evening of August 3 to coordinate strategies to press both sides (and especially the NCP) to move forward with last

week's good deal. AEC Chairman Plumby will seek to communicate that message to VP Taha (and with ICC indictee Ahmed Haroun, someone the serving European diplomats cannot meet with but the retired Plumby can) as soon as possible. CDA Fernandez mentioned that this is also something that US Special Envoy Williamson will want to raise, but the issue needs to be pursued immediately in any case, before his arrival on August 8.

15. (C) Comment: Compromises and deals unraveling in Sudan are extremely common. Sometimes they come together again and sometimes they remain unresolved. There is value in dogged persistence by the international community and that needs to be continuously brought to bear on Abyei. Certainly, the consensus view among AEC members was that if there is no progress on Abyei's interim government, the resulting vacuum could eventually deteriorate once again into fighting. This is especially true given the tense situation all along the border, especially in the neighboring Nuba Mountains area where Blue Nile Governor Malik Agar and Presidential Affairs Minister Bakri Salih are trying to calm passions. An early resolution of this latest impasse would, on the other hand, be further evidence that the NCP is continuing its "charm offensive" while the ICC sword of Damocles looms overhead.
End comment.

FERNANDEZ